Mr. *Meadowcourt's*

SERMON

Preach'd at

St. *PAUL's.*

November 6. 1724.

The Nature *of* TRUTH defin'd, *and its* Definition *apply'd to the* HOLY SCRIPTURES.

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

Cathedral-Church of St. *Paul's*,

November 6. 1724.

By RICHARD MEADOWCOURT, *A. M.*
Fellow of Merton-College *in* Oxford, *and Chaplain to the Right Honourable* WILLIAM *Earl* COWPER.

Publiſh'd at the Deſire of ſeveral of the Hearers.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

EDMUND,

Lord Biſhop of *London.*

MY LORD,

THE Deſign of this *Dedication* is not to attempt any Encomium of Your Lordſhip, on account of thoſe important Services which You

You have done for our *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Civil Eſtabliſhment*, and which are ſuch as muſt needs be remembred by Poſterity with juſt Applauſe, as long as the *Name* of GIBSON ſhall appear at the *Head* of *Learned Writers*, as long as any *Monuments* of *Hiſtory* are preſerv'd amongſt Men.

But the utmoſt that my Ambition leads me to at preſent is, to return Your Lordſhip my ſincereſt Thanks for the ſeveral Favours which I have receiv'd from You, and par-

particularly, for the Honour You was pleas'd to do me, in recommending me to HIS MAJESTY, for one of HIS *Preachers* at *Whitehall.*

If I am no Diſcredit to *thoſe Preachers* by the following Performance, I hope You will give a favourable Acceptance to this humble Offering; for which I muſt own, I have ſome Value, ſince it gives me an Opportunity of acknowledging my great and undeſerv'd Obli-

ga-

gations to You; which will always be acknowledg'd with Pleaſure by one, who has an entire Senſe of Gratitude and Duty to *Benefactors*, and who is therefore with the trueſt Reſpect,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

moſt dutiful and

moſt obedient Servant,

Richard Meadowcourt.

St. *John*, Chapter xvii. and latter part of Verſe 17.

Thy Word is Truth.

WHAT IS TRUTH, was made a *Queſtion* long before *Pilate* propos'd it to our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who was himſelf the *Author* and *Original* of *Truth*; and whoſe *Doctrines*, prov'd to be *Divine* by *Miracle* and *Prophecy*, might have *anſwer'd* an honeſt and unprejudic'd *Enquirer*. From the Beginning of Mankind to the preſent Time, it's *Truth* that has been the *Subject* of *human Curioſity*, and that has exercis'd the

Activity and *Attention* of a *rational Mind.* It's *this* that Men have ſought for amongſt all the Works and Production of *ſecond Cauſes*; that they have trac'd through the boundleſs Extent of *Space*, through the darkeſt Receſſes of *Speculation*, and through the moſt intricate Tracts and Mazes of *Thought.* It's *this* that the *Leaders* of every *Sect* in *Philoſophy* and *Religion* have *profeſs'd* to *teach*; and *this*, that their *Followers* have conſtantly *pretended* to have *learnt.* In ſhort, it's *this* which Multitudes have *prefer'd* to all other *Acquirements*; which they have *valued* beyond the largeſt Superfluity of *earthly Riches*; and which they have *purchas'd* at the *Expence* of their *Eaſe*, their *Intereſt*, and their *Lives*; nor have thought ſuch a *Treaſure* too *highly priz'd*, or too *dearly bought.*

BUT yet was a nearer Survey to be taken of *thoſe Perſons* who have ſeem'd the moſt earneſt and zealous in *purſuing* after *Truth*, what Numbers would appear to have *purſued* only its *Name*, and not

not its *Subſtance*; and inſtead of placing their *Affections* upon a *real* and *proper Object*, to have *doated* upon *Forms* and *Phantoms* of their own *Creation*, the Products of a *corrupt Heart*, or a *deluded Mind*. Through *every Age*, and in *every Country*, ſo many have been met with, who have *impoſed* upon themſelves; ſo many whoſe *Intereſt* it was to *impoſe* upon others; that *narrow* and *difficult* has been the *Way* that *leads* to *Truth*, and few have *found it out* after the *ſtricteſt Search*. Even *They*, who have ſet themſelves up to be the *Guides* and *Directors* of Mankind, whoſe Duty it was to point out that *pure* and *unclouded Light* with which *Truth* is *arrayed*, have generally endeavour'd to *obſcure* and *intercept* this *Light*, and to miſlead their unwary *Followers* into the *Paths* of *Falſhood*, by conducting them to thoſe *Regions* of *thick Darkneſs*, where *Ignorance* and *Sloth* jointly reſide.

However, tho' *Truth* is often forced to wander as a *Fugitive* and *Exile* upon

Earth; tho' *Falſhood* ſo frequently triumphs with *ſuperiour Strength*; yet there are ſtill ſome *Places* to be ſeen which are bleſs'd and enlighten'd by the *Preſence* of *Truth*, and *where* Multitudes are ſo *happy* as to *entertain* this welcome, this celeſtial *Gueſt*.

THAT the *Happineſs* here mention'd, is no more than every one amongſt us may juſtly boaſt of, I ſhall endeavour to prove to you in my following Diſcourſe.

For this purpoſe I ſhall firſt *define* what is meant by *Truth*; and then ſhall apply its *Definition* to the *Words* of my *Text*, in order to illuſtrate *thoſe Words*, and to ſet before you the Doctrines which ariſe from *them* in the cleareſt Light.

BY *Truth*, as I conceive, is meant *the Conformity of Ideas expreſs'd in a Propoſition to the Originals and Archetypes of thoſe Ideas*.

For

For all *Ideas* expreſs'd in *Propoſitions*, being *Copies* and *Tranſcripts* of ſuch *Archetypes* as either are real *Subſtances* exiſting without us, or elſe are *Ideas* themſelves, which were form'd at firſt by our own Minds; ſuch, for Inſtance, as *moral* and *abſtracted Ideas* are; it's evident, that *Truth* can be nothing elſe but the *Conformity* of *Ideas* to thoſe *Archetypes* from which they were originally *copied* and *tranſcrib'd*.

The Method therefore to diſcover *Truth*, and to diſtinguiſh it from *Falſhood*, is, to refer the *Ideas* of a *Propoſition* to their proper *Archetypes*, and to compare them with one another. If on ſuch a Compariſon, the *Copies* are *perceiv'd* to agree with their *Originals*, the *Propoſition* in which this Agreement is expreſs'd may be admitted of as *true*: But if it happens on the ſame Compariſon that there's no *Conformity* to be *perceiv'd* between *Ideas* and the *Archetypes* of them, we may juſtly reject the *Propoſition*

poſition as *falſe*. And this *Perception* of the Agreement or Diſagreement of the *Ideas* of a *Propoſition* refer'd as *Copies* to their *Originals* and compar'd with them, is what is meant by the *Knowledge* of *Truth* and *Falſhood*; of which, as to their Nature and Diſtinction, I have now treated as largely as is requiſite under the preſent Head.

I ſhall proceed in the next Place to apply the *Definition* of *Truth* to the *Propoſition* in my *Text*, THY WORD IS TRUTH.

AGREEABLY to this *Definition* the whole Meaning of our *Saviour's* Aſſertion is, that whatever *Notions* or *Ideas* are conveyed to our Underſtandings in the *Holy Scriptures*, which are the *Word of God*, are perfectly anſwerable to their proper *Archetypes*, which either exiſt without us, or are fram'd and lodg'd in our own *Conceptions*, or elſe are comprehended in the *Divine Mind* where the *Archetypes* of all Things are eternally fix'd.

In

In order to illuſtrate the foregoing Aſſertion in the cleareſt manner; I ſhall conſider the *Truth* of the *Holy Scriptures*, as they conſiſt, either, Firſt, of ſuch *Propoſitions* as are *moral*; or, Secondly, of ſuch as are *Hiſtorical*; or, Thirdly, of ſuch as are *myſterious*, and only expreſſive of *Ideas* whoſe *Archetypes* are plac'd above the Reach of a *finite Mind*.

WITH reſpect to *moral Propoſitions*, the Holy Scriptures may be ſaid to be infallibly *true*, as the *Ideas* there expreſs'd are exactly conformable to the *Archetypes* of them; which being placed in every Man's Breaſt, every one is capable of *perceiving* the *Truth* of the *Scriptures* in this reſpect. For whatever Rules or Precepts are preſcrib'd by the *Word of God*, for moderating the Paſſions, and regulating the Actions of reaſonable Creatures; we can immediately compare with the original *Notions* of *Good* and *Evil*, of *Virtue* and *Vice*, of *Rectitude* and *Depravity*, which we find with-

within ourſelves. And indeed, ſo perfectly conformable are all the *moral Ideas* of the *Goſpel* to all *moral Archetypes* univerſally eſtabliſhed, that the worſt and moſt unfair Enemies that *Chriſtianity* ever met with, could not but acknowlege, that the *Morality* of *it* roſe to much ſublimer Heights than any *moral Syſtem* had been carried before *it*, or than any beſides *it* could poſſibly be advanced. We have therefore of the *Truth* of the *Goſpel-Morality* a real *Perception* and certain *Knowlege*.

AS for *hiſtorical Propoſitions* contain'd in the *Holy Scriptures*, tho' their *Truth* is not built on the *Certainty* of *Knowlege*, yet it ſtands on a firm Foundation, which is the *Aſſurance* of *Belief*. For tho' the *Archetypes* of *Ideas* in *hiſtorical Propoſitions*, are *Facts* which long ago ceas'd to exiſt; yet as thoſe *Ideas* were formerly compar'd with their *Archetypes* by the Perſons who have *atteſted* ſuch *Facts*, and whoſe *Teſtimony* is to be eſteem'd of undoubted Credit, ſince they

they were appointed by God Himſelf to be *Witneſſes* to his *Truth*, and for this purpoſe were influenc'd and aſſiſted by his *Holy Spirit*; I ſay, that on theſe Conſiderations, the *Aſſurance* of the *Truth* of any *hiſtorical Propoſition* deliver'd in the *Scriptures* reſults from ſuch ſtrong and irreſiſtible *Evidence*, as almoſt amounts to *demonſtrative* and *certain Knowledge*. And thus it appears that thoſe *hiſtorical Propoſitions* furniſh us with ſufficient Grounds of *Aſſent*, and that we cannot *disbelieve* the *Truth* of them without being guilty of an unreaſonable and impious *Incredulity*.

The *Propoſitions* which I am next to conſider as *true*, are ſuch as are *myſterious*, and expreſſive only of *Ideas* whoſe *Archetypes* are plac'd above the reach of a *finite Mind*.

AMONGST *myſterious Propoſitions*, all *thoſe* are to be rank'd, which inform us of the *Exiſtence* of *Spirits* ſeparate from *Bodies*; of the *Joys* of *Heaven*,

within ourſelves. And indeed, ſo perfectly conformable are all the *moral Ideas* of the *Goſpel* to all *moral Archetypes* univerſally eſtabliſhed, that the worſt and moſt unfair Enemies that *Chriſtianity* ever met with, could not but acknowlege, that the *Morality* of *it* roſe to much ſublimer Heights than any *moral Syſtem* had been carried before *it*, or than any beſides *it* could poſſibly be advanced. We have therefore of the *Truth* of the *Goſpel-Morality* a real *Perception* and certain *Knowlege*.

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and the *Torments* of *Hell*; of the *Nature* and *Offices* of *Angels*; of the *Myſtery* of the BLESSED TRINITY; and of other ſublime and intricate *Truths*, which are not made ſubject to human *Knowledge*. But yet the *Definition* of *Truth* is as applicable to *theſe*, as to any other *Propoſitions* to which you have ſeen it already applied. For *Truth* being the *Conformity* of *Ideas* to their proper *Archetypes*, it follows, that the *Ideas* of *myſterious Propoſitions* muſt needs be be *conformable* to the *Archetypes* of them; ſince ſuch *Propoſitions* are revealed to us by God, who *cannot be deceiv'd*, and who never *will deceive others*; and therefore, that they are abſolutely *true*, according to the Notion of *Truth*, which is above explain'd. It's manifeſt then, that tho' the *Truth* of *myſterious Propoſitions* is the Object of *Faith*, and not of *Knowledge*; yet as that *Faith* relies upon *divine Revelation* and *Teſtimony*, the *Evidence* of the *Truth* of thoſe *Propoſitions* is ſo ſtrong and ſatisfactory, as not to admit of the leaſt Shadow of *Exception*, or *Doubt*.

I have now, as I perſuade my ſelf, clearly *defin'd* the *Nature* of *Truth*; and have prov'd, that the *Word of God*, which is the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, appears in all its Parts, or with reſpect to the *moral*, and *hiſtorical*, and *myſterious Propoſitions*, of which *it* conſiſts, to be entirely agreeable to this *Definition*.

FROM what has been ſaid, it will follow as an undoubted Conſequence, that the *Holy Scriptures* are the proper *Teſt* and *Standard* of all *religious Truth*; and that every *Doctrine* and *Opinion* in Things relating to God, muſt be *true* or *falſe*, as they are judg'd to be *anſwerable* or *contradictory* to *this Standard*. From hence too it follows, that amidſt the various *Debates* and *Diſſentions* which happen amongſt *Chriſtians*, amidſt the *Hereſies* and *Schiſms* which diſtract the *Church*, the only ſecure Way to arrive at *Truth*, and to avoid *Falſhood*, is to be cautious of *aſſenting* to *doubtful Propoſitions*, and to *ſuſpend* our

Belief of *them*, till we have carefully *compar'd them* with the *Holy Scriptures*, and perceive that they mutually *agree* and *anſwer* to each other. By this means we ſhall eſcape from the Snares which are laid to *deceive* us, by the *Craft* and *Sophiſtry* of the *Diſputers of this World*. We ſhall clearly diſcern the *Errors*, and ſhall readily detect the *Impoſtures*, which abound amongſt Men. We ſhall guide our *Aſſent* by an *infallible Rule*; and ſhall guard our *Faith* againſt the ſtrongeſt Oppoſition that *Infidelity* or *Enthuſiaſm* can poſſibly make.

SUCH are the *general Advantages*, which will reſult to every Perſon from the *Practice* of *comparing religious Doctrines* with their proper *Teſt* and *Standard* of *Truth*. But there are other *particular Advantages* to be diſtinctly treated of, which *this Practice* affords us, conſider'd,

1ſt, As *Chriſtians*.

2dly, As *Proteſtants*; and, 3dly,

3dly, As *Members* of the *National Church*, which the *Laws* of *this Kingdom* have *eſtabliſh'd* amongſt us.

And, firſt, I ſhall treat of the *Advantages* to be reap'd by us as *Chriſtians* from *this Practice.*

As often as we compare the *Doctrines* of *Mahomet*, or any other *Deceiver*, with the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, we are immediately determin'd in our Preference and Choice. We ſee and are convinc'd that the *Doctrines* on *one Side* are wholly compos'd of *Abſurdities* and *Fictions*; and that *thoſe* on *the other* are altogether *conſiſtent* with *Reaſon*, and *conformable* to *Truth*: That the *former Doctrines* tend to *corrupt* the *Minds* and *Morals* of Mankind; but that *the latter refine* our *Thoughts* and *reform* our *Actions*, by ſuch *Motives* and *Precepts* of *Virtue*, as are ſuited to *correct* every *vicious Habit*, and *irregular Deſire.* And, laſtly, that the *Doctrines* of *Deceivers* convey to us *Notions* which

are

are utterly *unworthy* of a *Deity*, and *inconſiſtent* with thoſe *Attributes*, which both *Reaſon* and *Chriſtianity aſcribe* to a *Being* who is infinitely *wiſe*, and *powerful*, and *good*.

The *Reſult* therefore of ſuch a *Compariſon* will be *this*, That having a rational and well-grounded *Aſſurance*, that *Chriſtianity* is the only *Religion* that carries with it the *Marks* of *divine Revelation*, we ſhall entirely acquieſce in the *Belief* of *it*, without yielding to any Attempts to ſtagger our *Faith*, and without being miſled by an *unſettled Judgment*, to wander through the *Wilds* of *Falſhood* and *Error* in a vain Purſuit after *religious Truth*.

2. The *Advantages* of the *Practice* above-recommended, which I am ſecondly to treat of, are ſuch as are peculiar to us as *Proteſtants*, and *Members* of that *ſound Part* of the *Catholick Church* which is purg'd from the groſs *Corruptions* of the *Church of Rome*.

WHEN

WHEN we *compare* the *Doctrines* of *Popery* with *thoſe* of the *Goſpel*, how wide a Difference is diſcernable between them! How entirely repugnant do they appear to each other! How *falſe* and *counterfeit* is the *Copy* of the *divine Original!* How *faint* a *Reſemblance* does the *degenerate Offspring* bear to that *heavenly Parent* from whence it *ſprung!*

Wherever we turn our Eyes on the *Roman Church*, an endleſs and ſhocking Train of *Impoſtures* and *Fictions*, of *Errors* and *Deluſions*, of *ſuperſtitious Rites* and *idolatrous Practices*, preſent themſelves to View. With Dread and Aſtoniſhment, we ſurvey a tyrannical and antichriſtian *Church* trampling on *Truth*, and inſulting over *Reaſon*; enſlaving the *Judgment*, and blinding the *Underſtanding*; preſcribing an *implicite Aſſent* to *abſurd Propoſitions*, and commanding *abſolute Obedience* to its *unjuſt Decrees*. We ſee a *Church*, the Reverſe of what our *Saviour* and *his Apoſtles* eſtabliſh'd, whoſe

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whoſe Aim is to promote the *Ignorance* inſtead of the *Inſtruction* and *Knowledge* of *its Members*. A *Church*, that graſps at the whole Extent of worldly *Wealth* and *Power*; and that endeavours to cheat Mankind out of their *Eaſe* and *Happineſs* in *this Life*, on a Pretence of ſecuring them from *Miſery* in *the next*. In a Word, we ſee a *Church*, that to maintain the *Dominion* which it ſo long has *uſurp'd* over the *Faith* and *Conſciences* of Men, is dreadfully arm'd with *Racks* and *Inquiſitions*, with *Fire*, and with the *Sword*, and with every other *Inſtrument* of *Penalty* and *Terrour*; leſt the *Laity* by *comparing* its *Doctrines* with *thoſe* of the *Goſpel* ſhould be converted to *Truth*; leaſt they ſhould throw off the painful *Yoke* of *popiſh Superſtition* and ſhould aſſert that *Liberty with which Chriſt has made us free.*

To *look upon* a *Church* ſo corrupt and erroneous in all its Parts, ſo oppoſite to *Chriſtianity*, and ſo deſtructive to the Peace and Intereſt of *Civil Society*, is a melan-

melancholy and unpleaſant *Contemplation*, not to be indulg'd without Horror and Grief. But yet it's a *Contemplation*, that will always be attended with the moſt deſireable and uſeful Effects: For *it* will fix upon our Minds a juſt and lively Senſe of the Mercy of God, which was expreſs'd towards us in our *providential Deliverance* from the *Bondage* of *Rome*. It will prepare us to exert all our Zeal and Faculties in Defence of the *Reformation*, and to guard *it* from every Appearance of Danger that can any way threaten *its* Security and Support. And, laſtly, *it* will teach us to unite in the ſtricteſt Bonds of *Benevolence* and *Charity* with all our *Proteſtant Brethren*, in defending the *Proteſtant Cauſe*; and to reſolve rather to *die*, than yield to a *Religion*, which is form'd to deprive us of *Liberty* and *Truth*, and whatever is worthy of our Concern, or Enjoyment in *Life*.

Thus have I ſet before you the *Advantages*, which accrue to us as *Proteſtants*,

ſtants, from comparing the *Doctrines* of *Popery* with the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*.

3. The *Advantages* which I am, Thirdly, to deſcribe, are *thoſe* which are peculiar to us as *Members* of the *National Church*, which the *Laws* of *this Kingdom* have *eſtabliſh'd* amongſt us.

WHEN we, who are *Members* of the *Church* of *England*, examine either the *Articles* of *Faith*, or the *Forms* of *Worſhip*, or the *Canons* of *Diſcipline* and *Government* preſcrib'd by our *Church*, we find in *them* nothing that's *contradictory* to *Scripture*; nothing but what we are *perſuaded*, is warranted to be *true* by its ſtrict *Conformity* to the *Goſpel-Precepts*, and to the *Practice* of the *Apoſtles*, and of the *primitive Church*. It will therefore be impoſſible for us, after ſuch a *Perſuaſion*, not to be eaſy and quiet in our Conſciences, as long as we continue in *Communion* with a *Church*, which is built after the Model of *Perfection* and *Truth*. By the *Evidence* which *it* gives us of *its* Purity

Purity and Excellence, we cannot but be determin'd to ſubmit ourſelves willingly to *its* Guidance and Direction; knowing that ſuch a *reaſonable Service* as *it* offers to God muſt be *acceptable* to Him, and that the Rules which *it* enjoins for promoting of *Order* and *Uniformity* in *divine Worſhip*, cannot be *diſpleaſing* to a *Being* from whom *Order* and *Uniformity* were firſt *deriv'd*. As for *Perſons* who are *otherwiſe-minded*, tho' they *charge* us with *Error*, or *Superſtition*, or with impoſing *unſcriptural Terms* of *Communion*, yet by *comparing* the *Doctrines* of our *Church* with *thoſe* of the *Goſpel*, we are aſſured that their *Charge* is *groundleſs* and *unjuſt*, and that it's founded either on *Ignorance*, or *Malice*, or *Miſtake*.

The *Advantages* which, in ſeveral reſpects, we are capable of receiving from a *Compariſon* of *religious Doctrines* with their *Standard* of *Truth*, being now particularly deſcribed, it will be eaſy and obvious for us to *infer*, that the *Practice*

of *trying* the *Truth* of *religious Doctrines* by ſuch a *Compariſon* is a *neceſſary Duty*, which on the Motives of Intereſt ſuggeſted in this *Deſcription*, we are ſtrongly engaged and incited to *diſcharge*.

The *Inferences* which are farther deducible from the whole of my foregoing Diſcourſe, are, that ſince *religious Truth* is of the utmoſt Importance and Benefit to Mankind, it's our *Duty* to *propagate* and *defend* this *Truth* by the *beſt* and *moſt effectual Means*.

To the end therefore, that a *Duty* of ſo much Conſequence may rightly be put in Practice, I ſhall conſider what *Means* are *beſt* and *moſt effectual*, either,

1ſt, To *propagate*, or

2dly, To *defend religious Truth*.

1. BY *propagating* of *Truth*, is meant the *procuring* of *Aſſent* to *it*. As therefore *Truth* muſt be *perceiv'd* before it can be

be *aſſented to*, ſo muſt thoſe *Means* be the *beſt* and *moſt effectual* to *propagate Truth*, which are moſt adapted to *produce* ſuch a *Perception* and to *procure Aſſent*. But in order to *produce* this *Perception*, nothing more is required than a View of *ſufficient* and *ſatisfactory Evidence* on the Side of *Truth*; ſo that when the *Evidence* of *Truth* is *ſufficient* to *produce* a *Perception* of *it*, we cannot *withold* our *Aſſent* from *it*: but when the *Evidence* is *inſufficient* for *this* purpoſe, then, as there is *no Perception*, there can be *no Aſſent*. The only way therefore to *propagate Truth*, is to inform the *Mind* of all the *Evidence* that can be urg'd on the Side of *Truth*, and to *diſpoſe* the *Judgment* to *examine* and *determine* on *ſuch Evidence* in the moſt *ſincere* and *unprejudic'd* manner. If the *Mind* thus *informed*, is *convinc'd* of the *Truth*, the *Judgment* will *embrace it* with a firm and immoveable *Aſſent*: But if the *Judgment* has *examin'd* the *Evidence*, and *determin'd* againſt the *Truth*, the *Aſſent* will be *govern'd* by this *Determination*;

tion; nor will ever the *Mind* be *prevail'd on* by the moſt powerful *Methods* or *Motives* that can be us'd, to *admit of* any Thing as *true*, in *Reverſe* of that *Sentence* which the *Judgment* has *paſs'd*.

It appears then, that every *Method* of *procuring Aſſent*, which is oppoſite to a *free Choice* and a *voluntary Belief*, is abſurd and unjuſtifiable; and conſequently, that *Force* and *Perſecution*, that *Penalties* and *Terrors*, are *Means* which are utterly *improper* and *ineffectual* to *propagate* the *Truth*. For ſince *Force* is not capable of *convincing* the *Mind*, or of *conveying* any *Light* or *Evidence* to the *Judgment*, it muſt needs be impoſſible for *it* to *produce Aſſent*, which muſt ſpring from *Conviction*, and *Evidence*, and *Light*. So far is *Force* from being ſerviceable to *Truth*, that it tends to *ſtrengthen* the *Prejudices* of Men againſt *it*, and to give them the moſt rational Grounds of *ſuſpecting*, that ſuch *Doctrines* can never be *true*, which owe their *Propagation* to the ſame *Methods* which

Falſ-

Falſhood is always ſeen to rely on for *Subſiſtence* and *Support*. *Force*, it muſt be acknowledg'd, may extort *external Conformity* and *Profeſſions* from Men; but it cannot be productive of *inward Conviction* and *real Belief*: It may regulate the *Geſtures* and *Actions* of the *Body*; but it has no Power to govern the *Mind*, or to lay *its Operations* under any *Reſtraint*: In ſhort, *it* may promote the Practice of *Hypocriſy* and *Diſſimulation*; but it never can, in the leaſt, contribute to the Advancement of *Piety*, or *Virtue*, or *Truth*.

AS what has been ſaid againſt the Uſe of *Force* and *Perſecution*, as the *Means* of *propagating Truth*, will hold good with reſpect to the *Means* which are *beſt* and *moſt effectual* for *its Defenſe*; ſo I hope to be excuſed, in having little to offer under the *next Head*, in which I propos'd to treat of *thoſe Means*.

I ſhall therefore obſerve to you no more than this, that tho' *Truth* ought gene-

generally to be *defended* by *Reaſoning* and *Argument*, and by *calm* and *diſpaſſionate* Endeavours to *confute* the *Doctrines* and *diſprove* the *Objections* of *Men* who eſpouſe *Falſhood*; yet when *theſe Perſons* proceed ſo far, as to *ſtrike at* the very *Root* of *Religion*, and to *inculcate* ſuch *Opinions* as are *inconſiſtent* with the *Preſervation* and *Intereſt* of *Civil Society*, it then is incumbent on the *Civil Magiſtrate*, to interpoſe and exert *his Power* in *Defenſe* of the *Truth*, and to *check* the *Growth* of *thoſe Opinions* which are ſo *contrary* to *Reaſon* and the *publick Good*. But how far the *Power* of the *Magiſtrate* ought to be *extended* in *ſuch Caſes*, the *Magiſtrate himſelf* is the moſt *proper Judge*; and he is *beſt acquainted* with the *Laws* of *Society*, by which the *Extent* of *Civil Power* is *meaſur'd* and *preſcrib'd*.

I have now ſufficiently explain'd to you, the *Means* which I take to be the *beſt* and *moſt effectual*, either to *propagate* or *defend religious Truth*.

IT remains then that I admoniſh and exhort all Perſons preſent, to be zealous and ſincere in applying *theſe Means* to the Attainment of ſuch *noble* and *important Ends*.

And ſince it's our Happineſs and Privilege to have the *Light* of *divine Truth* communicated to us, let me exhort you farther, to walk worthy of this *Light*; *to add to your Faith Charity*, and to manifeſt the Sincerity of your *Profeſſions* by a holy and virtuous *Converſation* and *Practice*; and, Laſtly, *To adorn the Goſpel of God our Saviour in all Things*, that ſo when our *Minds* ſhall be *diveſted* from the *Veil* of *Fleſh*, under which we *ſee but in part*, and *know only in part*, we may be admitted into thoſe *Realms* of *Light*, to which no Man can yet approach; where our *Deſires* and our *Faculties* of *Knowlege* will be free and unconfin'd; where every *myſterious Truth* will be clearly *unfolded* and *diſplayed* to our *View*; where *we ſhall behold God as*

he is, and where our Senſes ſhall have a full Enjoyment of thoſe unſpeakable and everlaſting Pleaſures, *which Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*; but to which we are aſſur'd, that God will be pleas'd to bring us by *Faith* in CHRIST JESUS, to whom with the *FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, THREE PERSONS AND ONE GOD, be Glory in the Church throughout all Ages.*

Publiſh'd by the ſame Author, and ſold by J. PEELE, *at* Locke's Head *in* Pater-noſter-Row.

THE DUTY of PREACHERS explain'd and ſtated, and prov'd to conſiſt in their endeavouring, as much as poſſible, by *Perſuaſion* and *Inſtruction*, to promote the Practice of UNIVERSAL CHARITY, upon the great Principles of a pure Heart, and of a good Conſcience, and of Faith unfeign'd: In a Sermon preach'd before the Univerſity of *Oxford*, in *Merton-College Chappel*, *May* 1. 1721.

II. The *ſinful Cauſes* and *fatal Effects* of the Practice of *Calumny* and Defamation in RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY, *exemplified* and deſcrib'd: In a Sermon preach'd before the Univerſity of *Oxford* in *Merton-College Chappel*, *May* 1. 1722.

III. The *Grounds* and *Rule* both of *interpreting* and *trying* the *Interpretations* of EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS, preſcrib'd and eſtabliſh'd, and particularly applied to a Series of *ſuch Events*, brought to paſs in behalf of the *People* of theſe *Kingdoms*, from the REFORMATION to the *preſent Time*: In a Sermon preach'd before the Univerſity of *Oxford* in *Merton-College Chappel*, *May* 1. 1723.